

S A I N T S & S I N N E R S
C A R A V A G G I O
& *THE BAROQUE IMAGE*



Edited by Franco Mormando

McMULLEN MUSEUM OF ART, BOSTON COLLEGE

Distributed by the University of Chicago Press

This publication is issued in conjunction with the exhibition *Saints and Sinners: Caravaggio and the Baroque Image*, at the Charles S. and Isabella V. McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College

February 1 to May 24, 1999

The exhibition is organized by the McMullen Museum of Art

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Library of Congress Catalogue Card number 98-68410 ISBN 1-892850-00-1

Distributed by the University of Chicago Press

Printed by Acme Printing

Designed by Office of Publications and Print Marketing at Boston College

JoAnn Yandle, Designer

Typeset in the Hoefler Text family

Paper stock is Potlach McCoy and Monadnock Dulcet

Copiedited by Naomi Rosenberg

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FRONT COVER:

The Taking of Christ, 1602
MICHELANGELO MERISI DA CARAVAGGIO
oil on canvas
53 x 67 in.
Society of Jesus, Ireland, on loan to the National Gallery of Ireland

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“JUST AS YOUR LIPS APPROACH
THE LIPS OF YOUR BROTHERS”:
JUDAS ISCARIOT AND THE KISS OF BETRAYAL
FRANCO MORMANDO

After [the Lord's Prayer] comes the greeting, "Peace be with you," and Christians kiss one another with a holy kiss. It's a sign of peace; what is indicated by the lips should happen in the conscience; that is, just as your lips approach the lips of your brothers or sisters, so your heart should not be withdrawn from theirs.

—AUGUSTINE, Sermon 227, "Preached on the Holy Day of Easter to the *Infantes*, on the Sacraments."¹

Then let the men give the men, and the women give the women, the Lord's kiss. But let no one do it with a deceit, as Judas betrayed the Lord with a kiss.

—*The Apostolic Constitutions*, late 4th century.²

ONE OF the most infamous kisses in the history of Western civilization was that given to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane by disciple-turned-betrayer Judas Iscariot, whose "filthy mouth... dared to touch the so loving and mellifluous mouth of the Eternal Word."³ Judas is the sinner *par excellence* of Christian history and the dramatic scene of his betrayal of Christ with its villainous kiss has been a popular theme of Western art since the earliest centuries. Indeed, since the earliest centuries, the scene has rarely been excluded from painted or sculpted depictions of the Passion cycle, even the most abbreviated of them.⁴ Perhaps the best-known and most-celebrated representation is that of the frescoed Passion cycle in Padua's Scrovegni Chapel by fourteenth-century Italian artist, Giotto, but Baroque Italy produced its own share of equally striking depictions.

We are fortunate in having two of the most stirring in the present exhibition. One, Ludovico (Lodovico) Carracci's *The Kiss of Judas* of ca. 1589–90 (Pl. 28), from the Princeton University Art Museum, is arguably the most startling, disquieting painted re-creation of that scene. The other is Caravaggio's deeply poignant *The Taking*

of Christ of 1602 (Pl. 30) belonging to the Jesuit Fathers of Dublin, in which the kiss, though presumably having already taken place (hence the forward movement of the soldiers), is still very much present in the proximity of Judas's lips to Jesus's.⁵ These two canvases have shared a similar destiny: both were lost to history for nearly two hundred years and only recently have been rediscovered. More important, these paintings were of great influence in their own day, several copies of each having been produced in the seventeenth century.⁶ Even when not copied directly, they served as unmistakable sources of inspiration for other artists, as we see in Guercino's distinctively Carraccesque *The Betrayal of Christ* (ca. 1621) in the Fitzwilliam Museum⁷ and the Anonymous Flemish Caravaggesco's *The Taking of Christ* of the same decade in Boston's Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) and included in the present exhibition (Pl. 29).

In all three of the paintings in our exhibition, the intensely emotional action of the scene is quite compact, placed close and crowded to the forefront of the canvas, drawing the viewer inexorably into the drama of the scene. The Caravaggio and Carracci canvases were commissioned for private collection and devotion; given its size and composition, we may assume the same for the Flemish work as well. Nothing, however, is known of the origins of the latter painting, purchased by the MFA from Colnaghi in 1977. It had been attributed to both Dirck van Baburen and Valentin de Boulogne.⁸ Recently Marina Mojana found that, "although certain passages . . . are done in a manner close to that of the French artist," the work indicates instead "the sphere of a northern Caravaggesco active in Rome in the second decade of the Seicento, an artist, I think, of the circle of Van Somer, as Brejon suggests."⁹ We know something more about the Princeton painting, though, again, nothing about the precise circumstances of its commissioning. First recorded in a 1640 inventory attached to the testament of Alessandro Tanari, the painting was part of the Tanari collection in Bologna, one of more than a dozen works of Ludovico

owned by that family of avid collectors. Yet, we do not know if the Tanari had commissioned the painting or instead had purchased it from previous owners. Designed as an overdoor, Ludovico's *Kiss of Judas* was an item of some notoriety in the Tanari collection during the seventeenth century, not surprising in light of its almost shocking eroticism, to which I shall later return. It is in this painting that Ludovico "emerges at his most idiosyncratic and original."¹⁰

Thanks to the intense scholarly research before and after its rediscovery in the early 1990s, Caravaggio's *The Taking of Christ* now has a fairly well-documented history.¹¹ One of three paintings done by Caravaggio for the Roman nobleman and art collector Ciriaco Mattei, *The Taking of Christ* was "almost certainly painted towards the end of 1602."¹² However, as with Ludovico's painting, the exact circumstances of its commissioning are unclear: who, for example, decided the subject of the painting and its interpretation? Creighton Gilbert has suggested, and reasonably so, that Cardinal Girolamo Mattei, Ciriaco's pious brother who lived in the same household, may have had some say in the choice of subject. Biographical data concerning Girolamo is scarce, but we do know that he had strong ties to the Franciscan order. Together with the rest of the Mattei, Girolamo had as his spiritual home the Franciscan Church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli on the Capitoline Hill. The Aracoeli was the beneficiary of much Mattei largesse; several of the Mattei, including Girolamo, Ciriaco, and their third brother, Asdrubale, are buried in the family chapels there.¹³ Furthermore, among Girolamo's official ecclesiastical roles was that of cardinal-protector of the Franciscan Observants, the large reform branch of the order that counted among its past luminaries Bernardino of Siena and John of Capistrano. (For many years, the Observants had had their Roman headquarters at the same church of the Aracoeli.) Girolamo, we might also note, was also part of a five-cardinal commission overseeing the enforcement of the Council of Trent's decrees on matters of discipline and morals and, therefore, would have been acutely aware of the various Post-Tridentine ecclesiastical concerns surrounding the style and content of religious painting.¹⁴

Girolamo's Franciscan connection, it is not unreasonable to conjecture, may have inspired the choice of the subject matter of Caravaggio's *The Taking of Christ*, given the significance of the Passion and, specifically, the scene

of the betrayal of Christ, in Franciscan spirituality. Although, to be sure, mental and visual contemplation of the Passion of Christ in its various "stations" was central to all of early modern Catholicism (as testified in the present exhibition by the Pulzone, Bassano, and Cavaliere d'Arpino paintings, Pls. 1, 9, 22), it had held a special place in Franciscan spirituality since the days of Francis of Assisi.¹⁵ It was the Franciscans who popularized the *Via Crucis* (The Stations of the Cross), one of the Catholic Church's most widely practiced devotions during the Holy Week observance of Christ's Passion. Francis himself, for his literal adherence to the example of Jesus in his poverty and self-abnegation, was considered by Franciscans and others in the Church as no less than an *alter Christus*, that is, another Christ, his stigmata seen as divine endorsement of this identification. More relevant to our discussion of the Caravaggio painting, Francis composed his own "Office of the Passion" for use by the brethren during Holy Week in place of the obligatory daily prayer from the Breviary at each of the canonical hours; as its preface specifically instructs, the brethren were to begin praying Francis's Office of the Passion at compline on Holy Thursday evening since "in that night our Lord Jesus Christ was *betrayed and captured*."¹⁶ Hence, if its owner were so inclined, the Caravaggio painting could have served in his private devotions as the visual starting point of the praying of the Passion, ending, in the customary way, with the entombment of Christ, as depicted by the Cavaliere d'Arpino included in the present exhibition (Pl. 22).

In discussions of the scene of the betrayal, Jesus Christ and his plight are most often, and understandably so, the focus of attention. However, I will focus this essay not on Jesus or his Passion, but on the less-scrutinized Judas Iscariot, and, in particular, the kiss. One of the most conspicuous details of the betrayal, the kiss, strange as it seems, is usually ignored in discussions, both theological and art historical, of the scene. In this essay, as in my previous essay in this catalogue, I seek to deepen our understanding of the paintings here studied, the Princeton Carracci, the MFA Anonymous Flemish, and the Jesuit Caravaggio, by examining what some of the most popular or otherwise representative written sources of the day said about Judas Iscariot, his betrayal, and his infamous kiss. These sources will give us a better idea of the resonance the figure of Judas and the motif of the kiss might have had in the hearts and souls of the seventeenth-century viewer,

if not the hearts and souls of the artist and his patrons.

After a preliminary look at character and image of Judas in general, we will concentrate on the scene of betrayal, ultimately focusing on the kiss, discussion of which occupied much space in the devotional-exegetical literature of the day. Indeed, next to the question of Judas's motive for betrayal, the kiss—the “instrument” of the betrayal, as it were—provokes the most discussion among the spiritual writers of late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Italy. Furthermore, as we shall see, thanks to the new historical research of Cardinal Baronius, early modern Catholics were being made more aware of the ancient ecclesial tradition of the ritual “kiss of peace.” An emblematically Christian rite since the earliest days of the faith, the kiss of peace was not unknown to the Catholics of Caravaggio's Italy, since it is mentioned, as we shall see, in the Pauline and Petrine letters and was still exchanged, though only verbally and in symbolic, perfunctory fashion, during the celebration of the Mass. Nonetheless, this newly heightened awareness of the role of the kiss in Christian tradition would have necessarily entered into their response to painted representations of Judas's kiss, a blatant perversion of the sacred Christian symbol of peace, unity, and love.

In the twentieth century, modern scriptural exegesis and psychological analysis have raised numerous unanswerable questions about, and have uncovered many logical contradictions and deep complexities in, the New Testament portrait of Judas Iscariot—his character, his behavior, his suicide—so much so that some serious scholars now even doubt his historical existence. Was he simply a figure conveniently invented to lend drama to the plot of Jesus's Passion and death? Was he merely a puppet “obediently” playing out his divinely ordained role in the drama of salvation history?¹⁷ Such questions were not asked in Caravaggio's Italy. Despite the discrepancies in the New Testament narrative apparent even then (such as in the descriptions of Judas's death in Matthew 27 and Acts 1), no one doubted either the historicity of the biblical account or Judas's fundamental character. Put simply, that is, with little subtlety—as in the literature in question—Judas was a demon-possessed criminal who committed the most heinous crime imaginable:

O evil heart harder than hardness . . . Woe to you wretch, hard-hearted one! . . . Even as He spoke, that wicked man, Judas, most evil merchant, came before the others and kissed him.

Did not Judas hold the terrible first place among all malefactors? Chief of traitors, prince of the ungrateful, leader of apostates and signal example of the despairing!

[T]he betrayal of Judas was an act of infinite sacrilege, perpetrated directly against the very Person of Christ and God. Thus it was true deicide. Wherefore it is exceedingly probable that Judas abides in the deepest pit of Gehenna, near to Lucifer, and is there grievously tormented.¹⁸

As for the motivation behind what the Jesuit exegete Cornelius a Lapide¹⁹ describes as “the horrible atrocity of Judas's wickedness” (3:158), again, our sources speak simply and unanimously: it was done out of pure avarice. As the celebrated sixteenth-century Franciscan preacher Mattia da Salò (1534–1611) explains in *The Sufferings of Christ*,

Brethren, think of the suffering caused to our Lord at that supper at Bethany (Mark 14) when Mary anointed His sacred feet and Judas, in order not to lose what he might have secured had that precious ointment been sold, forthwith agreed with the chief priests to betray his Master to them for money. Jesus, who knows and sees all, knows all about that betrayal and knows that it is done for money.²⁰

Indeed, the scholastic axiom *nomina sunt consequentia rerum* fully applies to Judas Iscariot; that is to say, there is an intimate connection between his very name and his moral identity. As Lapide points out, “Iscariot means in Hebrew the same as mercenary, for *sachar* is merchandise. And this well agrees with Judas who made merchandise of Christ.”²¹ Our authors, we might note, seem never to have questioned why a supposedly innately evil man, so exceedingly avaricious, would have chosen in the first place to become a follower of Jesus, the preacher of radical poverty, and would have even bothered to betray his master for what is admittedly “such a miserable sum,” thirty pieces of silver.²²

Be that as it may, as Ludolphus of Saxony's *Life of Jesus Christ*²³ (3:322) and Lapide's *Great Commentary* (3:160) point out, and as seventeenth-century Catholics would have known, the selling of Christ by Judas was prefigured in the Old Testament by the selling of Joseph by his brothers for twenty pieces of silver, a plan put forth by the brother named Judah, the Hebrew equivalent of Judas (Genesis 37; see the painting on the subject by Carlone in Section 4 of the present exhibition, Pl. 24). Indeed, seventeenth-century viewers would have seen the two episodes—the selling of Joseph and the taking of Christ—

expressly juxtaposed, for example, in frescoes attributed to Passignano in the Roman basilica of Santa Prassede.²⁴ Given the Mattei origins of Caravaggio's *The Taking of Christ*, it is interesting to note that in 1600 the *piano nobile* of the Palazzo Mattei di Giove was likewise decorated with frescoed scenes (by various artists) from the life of the same Old Testament patriarch, Joseph:²⁵ what personal significance, we might wonder, could this tale of the "dys-functional" family life of Joseph and his brothers have had for the Mattei brothers, Asdrubale, Girolamo, and Ciriaco?

Contemplating the scene of Christ's betrayal, the seventeenth-century Catholic would have been aware of a further religious-social association. As Hyam Maccoby observes in *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil*, "It may seem a strange coincidence that of all Jesus's twelve disciples the one whom the Gospel story singles out as traitor bears the name of the Jewish people."²⁶ His name a coincidence or not, Judas Iscariot was inevitably seen by many as paradigmatic of the entire Jewish people. According to the Christian antisemitic stereotype prevailing since medieval times, all Jews, like Judas, were notorious for their congenital avarice and perfidy:

And if we turn our attention to the men who were Satan's tools all combined to increase [Christ's] suffering. There was Judas, the most evil and cruel man that ever earth held; there was the thankless race of Jews in whom divine Providence had chosen to show forth its patience and mercy. . . . The rejection of Judas is a figure of the rejection of the Synagogue, and likewise in the malice and impiety of Judas are contained that of the Synagogue.²⁷

Indeed, in painted representations, Judas is often depicted with exaggerated, deformed features (such as the large hooked nose) that had become stereotypically associated with the Jews since medieval times. Other physical features frequently identifying Judas in art are his "red hair, red beard, ruddy skin (or all three)," these features having been the subject of an "ancient and continuous aversion," extending back even to Egypt of the pharaohs.²⁸ There were as well Judas's other iconographical attributes, his money purse and yellow clothing, that were also stereotypically associated with the Jews.²⁹

In this respect, the portraits of Judas by Carracci, Caravaggio, and the Anonymous Flemish Caravaggesco in the present exhibition all conform to artistic convention, in varying ways, whether in the ruddy skin, bony hand, and pointed nose of Carracci's Judas, the oversized,

beastly, gnarled hand of the Flemish Judas, or the big, squat red nose and coarsely furrowed forehead of Caravaggio's Judas. In addition, Carracci clothes his Judas in yellow. The influential *Revelations* of fifteenth-century mystic Saint Bridget of Sweden had publicized the fact—communicated to her by the Virgin Mary herself—that Judas was small in height (and hence Jesus had to lean down to respond to his kiss), but in only the Flemish painting does Judas appear as such.³⁰ Certainly, in each of our three paintings Judas is undoubtedly the most unattractive and most uncouth face in the crowd of faces before us, in deliberately disquieting contrast to the more pleasing, refined, and softer features of his defenseless, innocent prey, Jesus. (Indeed, in Carracci's canvas, Jesus is an ephobic "pretty boy.") The New Testament itself gives no indication of Judas's appearance, but it seemed only fitting to Christian artists that so morally repugnant a man should have been so physically repugnant as well. Gabriele Paleotti (d. 1597), the ever-vigilant, reform-minded cardinal of Bologna, who worried that appealing artistic representations of the morally reprobate might inspire in the viewer admiration and imitation of their ways, instead of "*stomaco e biasimo*," that is, visceral revulsion and blame, had nothing to fear from the present three canvases.³¹

Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sermons, devotional manuals, and biblical commentaries, as far as I can tell, disregard Judas's biography before his selection by Jesus as one of the Twelve. I suspect, however, that most Catholics in Caravaggio's Italy were aware of the traditional legends concerning his earlier life. In these legends, Judas was "bad news" from the very start of his life. The most popular source of such "information" was Jacopo da Voragine's *Legenda aurea*, still very much a part of the ordinary Christian's religious upbringing. Jacopo warns that the story (inserted in the February 24 entry on Saint Matthias, Judas's successor in the circle of the Twelve) is "apocryphal and little worthy of credence," but I doubt that this disclaimer prevented readers from accepting the tale as fact.³² Nevertheless, the *Legenda's* Judas is a thoroughly demonized character: even before betraying Jesus—as Ludolphus (3:340) mentions in passing—Judas had murdered his father and married his mother, an obvious grafting of the ancient Greek myth of Oedipus the King onto the biblical material. Even before his birth, Judas's mother had had, in a prophetic dream, premonitions of the horrendous destiny of her future son: "I dreamt that I was bearing a son so evil that he would be

the downfall of our race!"³³ Jesus knew of Judas's evil when he chose him to be one of his most intimate disciples; indeed, we are assured, he chose Judas "not through imprudence, but through providence," that his own Passion might be carried out as was pre-ordained and that he might set an example of patient tolerance of suffering and betrayal and love of enemies for all Christians.³⁴

However, again, the preachers, exegetes, and writers of devotional literature in our period were not interested in Judas's past, just as they were not interested in the subtleties of his character and motivation. Their concern, above all, was to draw what they believed were the divinely intended moral lessons from the fact of Judas's betrayal, lessons that could be applied to the daily life and spiritual formation of the Catholic layperson. What were Christians to learn from the scene of Christ's betrayal? We have already mentioned one of the most important lessons: that they were to emulate Christ, as Lapide says, "in order that thou, if thou art forsaken by thy friend, or even if betrayed by thy friend, mayest bear patiently the error of thy judgment, the loss of thy kindness."³⁵ Similarly, Ludolphus counsels the Christian to respond with as much love and as much tenderness as Jesus showed Judas in the hour of his betrayal.³⁶ Inviting the readers of his *Meditazione della Passione* to contemplate the scene of the betrayal of Christ, Capuchin preacher Bernardino da Montolmo (d.1565) instructs them not only to pray for the grace of serene acceptance of sinners but also to suspend all judgment upon such people: "O my Lord and my God, grant me the grace to tolerate in peace all those who are in error and to leave their judgment in your hands alone, most just God."³⁷

As for those, like Judas, in sin and error, there are many in the world. In fact, in *The Sufferings of Christ*, Mattia da Salò tells us, in effect, that Judas is Everyman: "And I would have you know . . . that Judas there stands for the common mass of men."³⁸ Accordingly, another sixteenth-century Capuchin, Giovanni Pili da Fano, in his treatise on the "art of union with God," invites Christians to examine their own consciences. They will find that they have indeed betrayed and sold Christ "not once, but a thousand times . . . not for thirty pieces of silver like the traitor Judas but for a mere, most miserable price."³⁹ In effect, therefore, paintings of the betrayal such as Caravaggio's *The Taking of Christ* were meant to be vehicles of self-scrutiny, mirrors of one's own soul; Christian viewers were to see their behavior reflected in that of Judas. This

may provide some clue to the meaning—if Caravaggio indeed intended meaning—of one of the most intriguing details of the painting, the highly polished, that is, mirror-like sleeve of the arresting soldier, which Caravaggio has placed in the very physical center of his canvas. Planting this quasi mirror so conspicuously in his canvas, was the artist, too, inviting his viewers to see themselves reflected in the behavior of Judas and the other tormentors of Christ?

For most viewers, however, both now and in seventeenth-century Italy, a far more conspicuous detail in artistic representations of the scene, I daresay, is the kiss, the specific vehicle of the betrayal, the signal arranged to alert the Roman soldiers to Christ's identity. The kiss stands out in the eye of the viewer not only as a visual detail; it is prominent, as well, as a moral symbol in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century discussions of Christ's betrayal, and thus merits a special place in our exploration of the original moral-emotional resonance of our three paintings within the hearts of their original audiences.

Present more subtly in Caravaggio's and the Anonymous Flemish's re-creations of the scene, the kiss confronts us with the full shock of its blatant, almost violent sensuality in Ludovico Carracci's painting. As Gail Feigenbaum points out in her fine analysis of the Carracci, Judas's seizure of Christ here comes across not as the grasping hold of a betrayer but, homoerotically, as the

tender and passionate embrace of a lover. In these circumstances, it not only calls up Judas's own ambivalence, emotional turmoil, and conflicting motives, but carries an erotic charge surely intended to disturb the spectator. The impact of the kiss of betrayal, perhaps mitigated through frequent representations in art, here is rendered shocking and new. The essential immorality of betrayal is viscerally conveyed.⁴⁰

However, the mere image of Judas's kissing Jesus on the lips in itself would not have shocked early viewers of Carracci's painting, nor would any other painted depictions of such a kiss have caused them to raise their eyebrows, for that was how they understood the gesture to have been executed. Even for the particularly impassioned kiss of Carracci's version, whether the artist knew it or not, there was scriptural justification: unlike all other New Testament forms of the verb "to kiss," the original Greek texts of both Matthew 26:49 and Mark 14:45 use a compound form of the verb *kataphileo*, which means "to kiss effusively or intensely," as opposed to the simple *phileo*.⁴¹ Réau observes that, "in Italian art, Judas always kisses

Jesus *on the mouth*” (emphasis original), and claims “there is no text justifying this iconographic tradition.”⁴² Yet, he is incorrect on both counts: first, we find sufficient examples of the “mouth-to-mouth” kiss in non-Italian art—the most notable, Dürer’s two depictions of the *Arrest of Christ* in both the 1508 small engraved and 1509 small woodcut Passion series, depictions of importance to both Ludovico Carracci and Caravaggio⁴³—so as not to judge it a distinctively Italian usage. Second and more important, there is a long history of textual justification for representing the kiss in this physically intimate fashion.

One of the most influential, time-honored texts describing the betrayal of Judas was the *Paschale carmen* of fifth-century Latin priest-poet Sedulius. Sedulius recast the gospel story in the elegant, noble form of classical epic verse, thus initiating a new genre that was to have a long history in the annals of Christian literature. Though all but forgotten today, the *Paschale carmen* (ca. 425–50) was on the required reading list of Christian schoolboys throughout the Middle Ages and “a source of inspiration for Latin and vernacular biblical epics well into the seventeenth century.”⁴⁴ It reached the apex of its popularity in the sixteenth century, when over thirty editions of the work appeared between 1501 and 1588. In Sedulius’s work we have what William Klassen identifies as the origin of the tradition of the demonized portrayal of Judas: “Sedulius shows no moderation in connection with Judas. . . . His imprecation against Judas, for which there is no biblical precedent, sets the standard for later writers.”⁴⁵ At the same time as he set this standard, Sedulius, it would seem, also set the iconographic tradition of a mouth-to-mouth kiss exchanged between Jesus and Judas:

And you, blood-thirsty, ferocious, arrogant, insane, rebellious, treacherous, cruel, deceptive, mercenary, iniquitous, betrayer, ferocious spy, thief, you come accompanied by those horrendous swords? You precede them, rather, as their ensign? And leading that sacrilegious mob with its menacing swords and spikes, *you press your mouth against his*, and infuse your poison into his honey?⁴⁶

In thus “painting” the scene of the “mouth-to-mouth” kiss of Judas, the *Carmen paschale* may simply be describing what the early Church both believed and, as we shall later see, practiced in its own ritualistic “kiss of peace,” a formal part of its communal worship and prayer and, eventually, of the liturgy of the Eucharist.

Sedulius’s epic, we might mention, was not the only text dating from patristic times referring to the mouth-to-

mouth kiss of Judas. Ludolphus’s *Vita Christi* quotes an unnamed work by Saint Ambrose (339–97) that also implies such a kiss. As we hear Ambrose apostrophizing Jesus, “Now, acceding to the kiss of your most holy mouth, you did not rebuff that cruel beast, but rather you sweetly applied your mouth in which no deceit is to be found to that mouth which spilled forth evil in abundance.”⁴⁷ The sermons of Bernardino of Siena, the great fifteenth-century Franciscan preacher whose cult flourished in Post-Tridentine Italy, provide further evidence that this remained, through the centuries, the orthodox image of the kiss of Judas. In three of his sermons on the Passion, Bernardino makes explicit reference as well to a mouth-to-mouth kiss: “And [Judas] came up to Jesus and said . . . ‘Hail, master,’ and kissed him on the mouth.”⁴⁸ To cite a final testimony, in commenting on the symbolic significance of the manner of Judas’s death as described in Acts 1:18 (“He bought a parcel of land with the wages of his iniquity, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle, and all of his insides spilled out”), Ludolphus explains that Judas’s bowels exited from his belly and not his mouth because his mouth had touched the mouth of Christ.⁴⁹

Not only did early modern Christians know that Judas had kissed Jesus on the mouth, they also knew further that the kiss was indeed a common manner of greeting among Jesus and his followers. This would explain why Judas chose the kiss as his identifying signal for the Roman soldiers, when he could have simply pointed a finger at Jesus. As Pseudo-Bonaventure (325) tells us, “It is said to have been the custom of the Lord Jesus to receive disciples He had sent out with a kiss on their return.” With Pseudo-Bonaventure as his likely source, Ludolphus points out the same (4:24b), as does Lapidé, who adds further historical information about early Christian practice:

[Y]et, in order to hide [his treachery] from the other Apostles, [Judas] pretends to give Christ the usual mark of friendship and reverence. It was the ancient mode of salutation. The Apostles probably saluted Christ in this manner, when returning back to Him from some other place. The early Christians also used to salute each other in the same way (see Tert[ullian], *De orat[ione]*, and 1 Cor. 16:20).⁵⁰

Commenting on Jesus’s rebuke of his host, Simon the Pharisee, who, as Jesus says in Luke 7:45, “had given [him] no kiss,” whereas the sinful woman had not ceased to kiss his feet, Lapidé comments that “[g]uests were in old times received with a kiss in sign of affection and welcome”

(4:210). Yet, Jesus's remark in Luke 7:45 is somewhat of an enigma since, according to the research of L. Edward Phillips, in Jewish culture both before and during Jesus's time, "greeting kisses *were not common*, apart from greetings after long absences . . . and there is nothing in the story to suggest that is what Luke had in mind. . . . In the final analysis, it is not at all certain there is any common social custom behind the kiss in the story."⁵¹ One possibility, however, is that Jesus is referring to the kiss, the sign of respect and homage, that was on occasion exchanged between a rabbi and his disciples, though for this the evidence is still "very sparse."⁵²

Be that as it may, the New Testament evidence indicates that not only was the exchange of a kiss customary among Jesus and his disciples, but that this form of greeting was emulated by the early Christian Church, as Lapidé informed us. On five occasions (Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:26, and 1 Peter 5:14), the New Testament refers to a kiss of greeting, referred to as the "holy kiss" or "kiss of love." If Phillips is correct about Talmudic law, such a practice among the early Christians would have been a source of scandal to their Jewish contemporaries. Although in the *Annales*, Cardinal Baronius gives the impression that the ancient Greeks and Romans condoned public kissing as a common, everyday practice, even among non-family members, historical research has shown that "ordinarily in Greco-Roman cultures, kissing between relatives was done in private, and public displays of affection were considered improper, and perhaps illegal."⁵³ Thus, as Phillips points out, the early Christian kiss of peace represented a radical "counter-cultural family bond;" the early Christians "were defying cultural norms when they kissed each other within their communities, and this provided the basis for scandal."⁵⁴

However it may have been practiced by the very first generation of Christians, the "holy kiss," by the second century, had become an institutionalized, ritualized part of the Church's communal prayer, and by the fourth century, a formal part of the Eucharist or Mass, which in the opening quotation of this essay, Augustine refers to as "the sacrament of the Lord's Supper."⁵⁵ A direct inheritance from Jesus and his disciples, the ritual kiss was endowed with great spiritual significance; the kiss was believed to have effected an infusion of the Holy Spirit, to have been an act of "spiritual impregnation and fecundation," as well as a sign of, indeed vehicle for, greater unity and love.⁵⁶ In his *Catechetical Lecture 23*, Saint Cyril of

Jerusalem instructs, "Think not that this kiss ranks with those given in public by common friends. It is not such: this kiss blends souls with one another, and solicits for them entire forgiveness. Therefore this kiss is the sign that our souls are mingled together, and have banished all wrongs."⁵⁷

Like Judas's kiss, the early Christian ritual kiss was given mouth-to-mouth, as Augustine and Hippolytus's *Apostolic Tradition* from the early third century testify.⁵⁸ However, over the centuries, the physical intimacy of the practice waned so that in the High Middle Ages, the Eucharistic kiss of peace became merely symbolic, exchanged by means of the so-called *osculatorium* or "pax-board," a wooden or metal board bearing the image of Christ's face that was passed among the congregation for its members to kiss.⁵⁹ Furthermore, "the kiss as a congregational act had largely disappeared by the end of the medieval period."⁶⁰ Though provision for the *osculatorium* (also called the *instrumentum pacis*) was made in the 1570 reform of the Roman Missal completed by Pius V, it was to be used only among the clergy in the sanctuary. By the time of Carracci and Caravaggio, the Eucharistic rite of peace was reduced to the verbal greeting, "Peace be with you," exchanged among the concelebrating clergy, the only kisses being those bestowed by the celebrant upon the altar and the *osculatorium*; the members of the congregation did not exchange the verbal greeting among themselves, much less physically kiss one another.⁶¹ Nonetheless, even in its attenuated, abbreviated form, the intended unitive symbolism of the "Kiss of Peace" rite of the Mass retained the attention of Christians, as we see in medieval and early modern commentaries on the Eucharist and Scripture, including that of Ludolphus.⁶²

In 1588, Baronius published the first volume of his *Annales ecclesiastici*, which he had begun long before as a series of evening talks for the public at Filippo Neri's Oratory. Among the numerous items of early Christian history and practice that it and subsequent volumes were to bring to the attention of Catholics—either for the first time or with renewed interest and appreciation—was that of the kiss of peace. To this topic the cardinal devotes several paragraphs of description, patristic citation, and commentary in his discussion of the letters of Peter in the *Annales*—a discussion further disseminated by Lapidé in his widely consulted *Great Commentary on Scripture* produced early in the 1600s.⁶³ After having read or heard of Baronius's rediscovery of the history and function of that ancient practice, early modern viewers could not have approached painted representations of the kiss of Judas

such as those included in the present exhibition (all post-dating the publication of Baronius's first volume), with the same eyes and hearts.

Beginning with a contrast with the pagan Roman social use of the kiss, which had become a noxious duty, Baronius details the history and symbolism of the Christian ritual kiss, citing, as is his wont, various testimonies from the Church Fathers and other early Christian sources. He strives to reassure his readers that, unlike the pagans, our Christian ancestors did not abuse the kiss.⁶⁴ Although he neglects to explain that this kiss was done mouth-to-mouth, Baronius seems to take that fact for granted, quoting, for example, John Chrysostom, who makes an analogy between the exchange of the kiss of peace among Christians, who are "temples of Christ," and the kissing of the "entrance" of a church or temple (apparently another early Christian custom).⁶⁵

What Baronius does make explicit is that the kiss of Judas was an utter perversion of this symbol of peace, unity, and love. Quoting Origen's *Epistle to the Romans*, Baronius juxtaposes the ritual kiss of peace with the kiss of Jesus's betrayer: "The Apostle [Paul] calls this kiss holy; by this adjective he is teaching, first, that the kisses given in Church must be chaste; and, second, that they must not be false, as were those of Judas."⁶⁶ The juxtaposition was inevitable. It is not surprising, therefore, that we find similar

admonitions in many several other early Christian writings, such as the late fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions* quoted at the beginning of this essay, and as we do in Ambrose and Augustine. Ambrose views Judas as a "species of monstrosity" and his kiss as a "bestial conjunction of lips" in that it horribly abused the act of kissing and perverted its sacred significance of love, unity, and faith.⁶⁷ Augustine's already quoted Easter sermon does not mention Judas, but another of his sermons does: "Because the kiss of peace is a holy mystery, one should kiss so as to inspire love. Be not like Judas. Judas the traitor kissed Christ with his mouth, but in his heart he was betraying him."⁶⁸

Although, to be sure, the symbol of the spiritual-liturgical kiss was not the only hermeneutical key to the episode of the betrayal, it nonetheless represents yet another important perspective from which early modern representations of Judas's kiss, such as that of Carracci, Caravaggio, and our Anonymous Flemish Caravaggesco, could have been read.⁶⁹ The many condemnations of the kiss of Judas that have been issued throughout Christian history inevitably resound with the horror deriving from the sight, not only of the perversion of a very human social-emotional gesture, but also the profanation of one of Christianity's time-honored spiritual symbols and liturgical rites, the kiss of peace.

1 Augustine, 254.

2 Cited by Perella, 28. Note that by the fourth century, the sexes were segregated in early Christian worship; see n. 64 below.

3 Ludolphus, 4:25. All translations from non-English texts are mine unless otherwise indicated.

4 See Schiller, 2:52; and Millet, 44–48.

5 It could also be that the soldiers are rushing forward to seize Christ simultaneously as Judas prepares to kiss him, although according to Giovanni Pietro Bellori's description of the canvas, "Judas is shown after the kiss with his hand on the Lord's shoulder" (quoted in Hibbard, 367, emphasis added). As mentioned in the discussion of the Francesco Vanni painting in my other essay in this catalogue, the kiss is an important symbol in the Lucan pericope of Christ in the House of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:37–50, an episode also known as "The Conversion of Mary Magdalene"): the repentant, loving, and humble Mary covers Jesus's feet with kisses, whereas the self-righteous Pharisee had greeted Jesus with no kiss, for which Jesus reprimands him (Luke 7:45). Speaking of this scene, Saint Ambrose likens Simon the Pharisee to Judas: "So the Pharisee had no kiss, except perhaps the kiss of the traitor Judas" (*Epistola 41, Frater sorori*, quoted by Perella, 28).

6 See Feigenbaum, 3; Bassani and Bellini, 124. Feigenbaum's article is the fundamental study on the Carracci painting.

7 See *Treasures from the Fitzwilliam*, 92, cat. 94; and *Guercino in Britain*, 29, cat. 11.

8 The painting has been listed under Valentin in the MFA catalogues until very recently, whereas Nicolson, 18 and fig. 121, lists it as van Baburen. Van Baburen did two versions of this scene, neither of which is compellingly similar to the MFA canvas: see Slatkes, cat. A1, fig. 9; and cat. A7, fig. 11.

9 Mojana, 249.

10 Feigenbaum, 52.

11 For Caravaggio's *The Taking of Christ*, see Benedetti, 1993a and 1993b; Benedetti, 1995; Fiore; *Caravaggio and the Mattei*, 124–26, cat. 3; Gilbert, 135–41, 150–53; and Treffers, 278–80.

12 Benedetti, 1993a, 733.

13 On Girolamo Mattei, see Gilbert, 99–103; see also Sergio Benedetti's essay in the present catalogue for more on the influence of Girolamo and Franciscan spirituality on Caravaggio's *The Taking of Christ*. There is pleasing irony in the fact that, given the twentieth-century destiny of Caravaggio's painting—rediscovered after centuries in Dublin—Mattei was also cardinal-protector of the Catholics of Ireland. On the Mattei, see also the *Dictionary of Art* s.v. "Mattei," 20:839–41. For

- the church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli, see Casimiro Romano and Carta-Russo. In 1585 the Aracoeli was still home to the Observant Franciscans; a bull issued by Sixtus V on August 2 of that year refers to “domus Beatae Mariae de Aracoeli de Urbe Ordinis Fratrum Minorum de Observantia” (Casimiro Romano, 470). We might mention that a frescoed Passion cycle by Roncalli (dated most probably 1585–86) adorns the ceiling of one of the Mattei chapels in the Aracoeli, the Cappella della Pietà. Roncalli’s cycle includes the scene of the arrest of Christ. Now extensively repainted, this fresco could thus have served as a point of reference for Caravaggio. So, too, might the canvas by his former employer, the Cavaliere d’Arpino (*The Taking of Christ*, Galleria Borghese), usually cited as the most noted rendition and the most accessible to Caravaggio when he executed his Mattei painting. Like the Cavaliere d’Arpino’s composition, Roncalli sets the action at a distance with respect to the foreground of the picture and within a larger, fairly well-articulated natural landscape. See Kirwin, 34–36; and Heidemann, 32 and fig. 25 for the ceiling paintings (which the author does not discuss in detail “since they are heavily painted over”).
- 14 Gilbert, 100.
 - 15 See Derbes, 35; Chap. 2 (35–71) of Derbes’s book is devoted to “The Betrayal of Christ.”
 - 16 “Et incipiunt a completorio feriae quintae Coenae dominicae, eo quod in illa nocte *traditus fuit et captus* Dominus noster Iesus Christus,” Francis of Assisi, 126, emphasis added. Following Francis’s example, Saint Bonaventure too composed a special “Office of the Passion,” which at matins has as its invitory and psalm refrain, “Christ *captured* and mocked, flagellated and crucified, come let us adore” (Bonaventure, 393, emphasis added).
 - 17 Klassen, 1–10.
 - 18 The three passages are from, respectively, Pseudo-Bonaventure, 313 and 325; Mattia da Salò, 237; and Lapidè, 3:172. For Pseudo-Bonaventure and his enormously influential *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, see my other essay in the present catalogue, “Teaching the Faithful to Fly.”
 - 19 For Lapidè, see my other essay in the present catalogue, “Teaching the Faithful to Fly.”
 - 20 Mattia da Salò, 334–35.
 - 21 Lapidè, 2:8; see also Ludolphus, 3:322 for Judas’s avarice.
 - 22 The quotation is from Lapidè, 3:158. Citing Baronius, Lapidè discusses at length the significance of this silver, a piece of which, he tells us, was kept as a relic in the basilica of Santa Croce in Rome (3:158–60).
 - 23 For Ludolphus of Saxony and his best-selling devotional commentary, the *Vita Jesu Christi*, see my other essay in the present catalogue, “Teaching the Faithful to Fly.”
 - 24 Zuccari, fig. 6, and the discussion thereof, 114–18.
 - 25 *Dictionary of Art*, s. v. “Mattei,” 20:841.
 - 26 Maccoby, ix.
 - 27 Mattia da Salò, 250. However, I must point out that the theme of Judas as representative of the entire Jewish race is not prominent among the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sources I have examined.
 - 28 Both quotations are from Melinkoff, 33. For the iconography of Judas, see also Baum, 1922.
 - 29 Yellow was the color of the circular patch of cloth—variously known as the *rouelle*, *rotella*, or in the parlance of Italian Jews, *scimanno*—which canon law (canon 68, *In nonnullis provinciis*, of the Fourth Lateran Council, 1215) required Jews to wear as an identifying badge. The canon, however, was not always obeyed in Christendom during the Middle Ages, the popes themselves having issued exemptions to the Jews. Pope Paul IV’s 1555 bull, *Cum nimis absurdum*, which instituted the ghetto system, repromulgated the obligatory wearing of the badge. In Italy the badge law remained in effect until the late eighteenth century. See the entry, “Badge, Jewish,” in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 4:64.
 - 30 Réau, 2:434.
 - 31 Paleotti, 310.
 - 32 Jacopo da Voragine, 172. For the medieval Judas legends, see Baum, 1916; and Enslin.
 - 33 Jacopo da Voragine, 172.
 - 34 Lapidè, 2:8–9; the quotation comes from Saint Ambrose, as cited by Lapidè.
 - 35 Lapidè, 2:9, again quoting Ambrose.
 - 36 Ludolphus, 4:26.
 - 37 Bernardino da Montolmo, 534–35. In similar vein, see also the two Capuchins, Michelangelo da Venezia (d. 1611), *Fascetto di mirra*, 1338; and Alessio Segala da Salò (1559–1628), *Arca santa della vita e passione di Cristo Signor Nostro*, 1701–02.
 - 38 Mattia da Salò, 343.
 - 39 Pili da Fano, 337.
 - 40 Feigenbaum, 6–7. According to Ambrose as reported by Ludolphus (4:25), Jesus responded to Judas’s greeting almost in kind: “with the tenderness of a lover, Christ grasped his betrayer” (quasi amantis affectu Christus corripuit proditorem). In our three paintings, however, Jesus simply receives the kiss passively, his hands and facial expression indicating patient, sorrow-filled submission to the evil act.
 - 41 Halas, 140. However, not all scholars believe that the compound form of the verb truly conveys an intensified sense; no modern English translation, in fact, translates the verb literally, i.e., “he kissed him *intensely* or *effusively*.” Nor did the Vulgate—the Latin translation of the Bible in use during Carracci’s lifetime and until the Second Vatican Council—translate the Greek as such; the Vulgate renders the Greek as “et osculatus est eum.” Yet, as *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* observes (636–37, s. v. “Kiss”): “the stronger force of this verb [*kataphileo*] has been called in question, but the change from *phileo* to *kataphileo* in Matt 26:49 and Mark 14:45 can scarcely be without significance, and the act of the traitor was almost certainly more demonstrative than the simple kiss of salutation.” One wonders if the unwillingness of biblical translators to render the original verb, *kataphileo*, in a literal, intensified form derives more from discomfort

- with the psycho-sexual implications of the act it describes, than it does from the convictions of objective linguistic analysis.
- 42 Réau, 2:434.
- 43 See Fiore; see also Benedetti, 1993b, 38, fig. 2, for a reproduction of Dürer's 1508 woodcut of *The Arrest of Christ*, from the Great Passion series; we find the very same image in Dürer's small engraved Passion series as well. For some non-Italian medieval Eastern representations of the mouth-to-mouth kiss, see Millet, 326–44; and Mellinkoff, 36–37, figs. 4 and 5.
- 44 Springer, 1, for the quotation and the information about the sixteenth-century destiny of the work; for more on the *Carmen's* influence during the medieval and early modern periods, see Springer, 128–50.
- 45 Klassen, 19.
- 46 Sedulius, 5:60–64 (Huemmer ed., 118–19; Corsaro [Italian] translation, 111–12), emphasis added.
- 47 Ludolphus, 4:25.
- 48 “Della passione del nostro signor Gesù Cristo,” 295 (whence the quotation); “Della passione di Gesù Cristo,” 354 (“E baciollo in bocca”); and “Tractatus de passione Domini nostri Iesu Christi,” 201, l. 9 (“Oscularis sanctum os et virtutem eius non sentis!”). In one of his sermons on Mary Magdalene, commenting on Luke 7—the scene depicted in Francesco Vanni's *Christ in the House of Simon the Pharisee* (Pl. 5)—Bernardino has Jesus reprimanding his host, Simon, for not giving him a kiss of greeting “on the mouth” (“e tu non m'ài pure baisato la bocca”) when he entered his house, unlike Mary who has covered his feet with kisses. As Bernardino explains, “it was the custom then, when you invited someone to eat, you gave him a kiss on the lips when he entered your house as a sign of love and charity” (“Di santa Maria Madalena,” 194–95).
- 49 Ludolphus, 4:53. Note that Peter's account of Judas's death in Acts 1 contradicts that of Matthew 27:4 which has Judas committing suicide by hanging. At the end of one's contemplation of the scene of the betrayal, Ludolphus suggests to his readers that they kiss the feet of the Crucifix since we are “unworthy of kissing the mouth” of Jesus (4:26).
- 50 Lapide, 3:215.
- 51 Phillips, 1992, 79–80, emphasis added. Indeed, according to Jewish law, public kissing was permitted only in very few circumstances, “and a woman found kissing a strange man could be accused of adultery” (Phillips, 1992, 26–27). For Jewish custom and law, see Chap. 1 of Phillips's 1992 study. For the early Christian kiss of peace, see Phillips, 1992 and, in briefer form, the two pamphlets by Phillips (1996) and Buchanan.
- 52 Phillips, 1992, 80; the older and less scrupulously documented work on Judas by Halas, instead, claims that “according to the Talmud, the kiss was the usual sign of homage and honor among teacher and disciple” and that “the kiss was the customary Oriental salutation upon meeting a friend” (140–41).
- 53 *Annales*, an. 45, cc. 23–26, 299–301; the quotation is from Phillips, 1996, 6, who cites (6, nn. 5 and 7) Plutarch's story of a Roman senator expelled from the Senate for kissing his wife in public, as well as Peter Brown's remark, “The evidence . . . gives little support to the widespread romantic notion that the pre-Christian Roman world was a sunny ‘Eden of the unrepressed’” (*The Body and Society* [New York, 1988], 21).
- 54 Phillips, 1996, 36.
- 55 See Phillips, 1992, Chap. 3; 1996, 16–35; and Perella, Chap. 1. Much, however, is still to be known about the use and manner of the early Christian ritual kiss.
- 56 Perella, 18–27, 20 for the quotation above; Phillips, 1996, 16–19.
- 57 Cited by Perella, 24.
- 58 *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 8:207, s.v. “Kiss, Liturgical.” Figure A on the same page reproduces a kiss of peace on the mouth as depicted on the ivory cover of a mid-ninth-century sacramentary belonging to Bishop Drogo of Metz.
- 59 For the kiss of peace in the medieval and early modern Mass, see Jungmann, 321–32. According to Jungmann (329) the *osculatorium* “put in a first appearance after 1248 in English diocesan statutes.” One of the few surviving examples of the medieval pax-board can be seen in the permanent collection of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, acq. n. 1981.365.2. Attributed to Niccolò di Tommaso (Florentine, active between 1343 and 1376), and made of wood (11 5/8 x 8 1/8 in.), its bears the face of Christ and the inscription in Latin, “My peace I give unto you” (John 14:27). (My thanks to Dr. Andrea Bayer of the Metropolitan Museum for this information.)
- 60 Phillips, 1996, 36.
- 61 *Missale Romanum* (Venice, 1607, unpaginated), under the rubric, “Ritus celebrandae Missae: De oratione Dominica et aliis usque ad sanctam communionem.”
- 62 Bossy, 54–58. For Ludolphus on the kiss of peace, see 4:214.
- 63 *Annales*, an. 45, cc. 23–26, 299–301. Relying heavily on Baronius, Lapide discusses the kiss at length in his commentary on 2 Corinthians 13:12 and 1 Peter 5:14 (Lapide/Corinthians, 512 and Lapide/Peter, 403).
- 64 Yet, according to Lapide, the *osculatorium* (which he calls the *tabella pacis*) was introduced precisely because of an abuse of the ritual: the men—customarily segregated from the women in Christian worship—started “sneaking” across the divide (*furtim tamen irrepentes*) to kiss the women (Lapide/Corinthians, 512). The separation of the sexes meant that the men were to kiss only other men, and women, only other women; see Jungmann, 327–28. For abuses of the kiss, see also Phillips, 1996, 23–25.
- 65 *Annales*, an. 45, c. 25, 300. Presumably, the “entrance” to the human body—which is the “temple of Christ”—is the mouth.
- 66 *Annales*, an. 45, c. 25, 300.
- 67 Perella, 28, 29; see 28 for a similar idea expressed in Augustine.
- 68 Augustine, quoted by Perella, 28 and n. 41, 279–80, citing *Miscellanea Agostiniana, I, Sermones post Maurinos Reperti* (Rome, 1930), 31–32.
- 69 For another use of the kiss as spiritual symbol, see Bernard of Clairvaux's greatly influential sermon 87, “De tribus osculis,” inspired by the Song of Songs (1:1: “Let him kiss me with kisses of his mouth”), in which the three types of kisses (of the feet, the hands, and the mouth) become symbols of the progressive stages of union with God.

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